The
Pagan
Library

The Myth of Diancecht and Minach

Iarwain

The following is reprinted from 'Keltria : A Journal of Druidism and Keltic Magick' which is published 4 times a year at the traditional cross-quaters festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasadh. Subscriptions are available for $6.00 for 1 year. For further information write them at:

> — Keltria
> PO Box 33284
> Minneapolis, MN 55433

The Myth of Diancecht and Minach

An Interpetation By Iarwain

In the first battle of Moy Tura, Nuada lost his hand. Diancecht fashioned a new one of silver and skillfully joined it to Nuada's arm. One day Diancecht's son Miach took what was left of Nuada's real hand, placed it next to Nuada's arm and uttered an incantation. AFter three days and nights the hand was rejoined and renewed.

Diancecht was furious that his son was a better healer than he. Diancecht struck Miach three times in the head with his sword. Miach was able to heal each wound. On the fourt blow, Diancecht split Miach's head in two, killing him.

From Miach's grave grew 365 herbs, each one with curative powers for one of the 365 nerves in the body. Miach's sister, Airmid, picked these herbs and arranged them according to their curative powers. Diancecht became so enraged that his son rivaled him even after death that he scattered the herbs about, hoplessly confusing them. If Diancecht hadn't done this, man would be immortal.

Several meanings can be found in this myth.

One meaning is that Diancecht represents the order of society. Miach was the young upstart, the rebel. Although good came from his actions, he acted out of his place. IN time he might have replaced Diancecht as the healer of the Gods, but he threatened order by challenging Diancecht and had to be stopped.

From Miach's grave grew 365 herbs to heal the body. From his death, new life, in the form of curative herbs, grew. This represents the idea that life feeds on life. That new life may only come through death of old. In a Native American Myth, it was corn that first grew from the grave of a young man's spirit guide; in the South Pacific, the coconut tree first came from the death of a young woman's spirit lover. This is a common thread in the mythoilogy of many cultures. In most some sort of food is tehs ymbol for new life, in the Diancecht myth, it was the curative powers of the herbs.

I wonder why Diancecht scattered the herbs. After thinking about it, it seems obvious that the herbs represent immortality, something that man was not meant to have. I found a variation of this interpretation in a myth of the Yamana of Tierra del Fuego.

In the Yoalox family, there were two brothers, of which the younger was the smartest and the most talented. One day the elder brother was playing with some stones, striking them together for his amusement. He discovered that when he struck certain stones together they gave a spark. He struck the stones in such a way that a spark ignited some dry down. He then got some kindling and built a fire. He showed his fire to his younger brother explaining that they could keep it burning forever so that people could have fire without trouble. The younger brother disgreed saying that it would be much better if people had to work for it. He then took a stick and scattered the embers. Since that time, people have had to work to make fires.

The Yamana myth ends in a similar manner toi the Diancecht myth. Some boon was created so that people's lives would be made easier, but the results were scattered away. I believe that the lesson of the Yamana myth can also be applied to the Diancecht myth. Diancecht did not scatter the herbs just out of anger. The curative powers of the herbs could not be given to man, but must be worked for.

As with most myths, the Diancecht myth has many meanings, there may be some I have missed. The number of herbs relates to the number of days in the year and there must be some relation to the number of times Diancecht struck Miach and to how long it took Nuada's hand to regenerate. How do these relations add to the myth?

References:

- On the Myth of Daincecht: Charles Squire, CELTIC MYTH AND LEGEND, pp 81-82
- John and Caitland Matthews, THE AQUARIAN GUIDE TO BRITISH AND IRISH MYTHOLOGY, P.117
- On the Origin of Corn: Joseph Campbell, THE MASKS OF GOD-PRIMITIVE MYTHOLOGY, PP 216-220
- On the Origin of the coconut: IBID op. cit. pp 190-195.

- On the Origin of Fire: IBID, HISTORICAL ATLAS OF WORLD MYTHOLOGY, Vol I Part 2, PP 259-260.

Fast Forward
2019-05-28 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=29)
Kindly Pagans, White Supremacists Hold Dueling Gatherings In Southern State Park

Keep the Faith
2019-05-27 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=27)
Young black women are leaving Christianity and embracing African witchcraft

CBN News
2019-05-27 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=25)
Atlanta Church Hires Psychic Medium to Minister to Congregation

The Week
2019-05-25 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=23)
The princess of Norway and her shaman lover

Religion News Service
2019-05-24 (/articles2/article.php?article_id=21)
Getting in on - and tossed out of - the Satanist Temple joke - Religion News Service

More Articles (/articles2/)

Search

Quote of the moment:

I've given up the search for reality; now I'm just looking for a good fantasy.

This site has received hits since Aug 4, 2000

COPYLEFT:
The entire content of all public pages in The Pagan Library (graphics, text and HTML) are free information, released under the terms of the GPL. All copyrighted items mentioned are the property of their respective owners, and no form of ownership or endorsement is implied.

Last modified: August 19 2018 15:00:02